

MY MOTHER'S VOICE



KAY MOURADIAN

October 8, 2015, History-Social Science SMC meeting, received from Kay Mouradian copy of her book, My Mother's Voice, along with a DVD of the movie, My Mother's Voice- WWI and the Armenian Genocide.

By Walter M. Geddes.

Aravan (22)
Description
I left here on the 16th September, 1915, for Aleppo. I first saw the Armenians at Afion Karahissar where there was a big encampment -- probably of 10,000 people -- who had come down from the Black Sea. They were encamped in tents made of material of all descriptions, and their condition was deplorable.

The next place I saw them was at Konia, also a large encampment. There I saw the first brutality, I saw a woman and her baby separated from her husband; he was put on our train while she was forcibly held behind and kept from getting on the train. The next place where there was a large encampment was at Osmanieh where there was said to be about 50,000; their condition was terrible. They were camped on both sides of the railway track extending fully half a mile on each side. Here they had two wells from whence they could get water, one of which was very far from the encampment, the other at the railway station platform. At daybreak the Armenians came in crowds, women and children and old men, to the well to get water. They fought among themselves for a place at the well and the gens-d'armes to keep them in order, whipped several people. I saw women and children repeatedly struck with whips and sticks in the hands of the gendarmes. Later, I had occasion to pass through the camp on the way to the town of Osmanieh and had an op-

portunity to see the condition of the people. They were living in tents like those above described and their condition was miserable. The site of the encampment had been used several times by different caravans of Armenians and no attempt at sanitation had been made by either the Turks or the Armenians themselves with the result that the ground was in a deplorable condition and the stench in the early morning was beyond description. At Osmanieh they were selling their possessions in order to obtain money to buy food. One old man begged me to buy his silver snuff box for a piastre in order that he might be able to buy some bread.

From Osmanieh, I travelled by carriage to Rajo and passed thousands of Armenians en route to Aleppo. They were going in ox-carts, on horseback, donkey-back, and on foot, the most of them children, women and old men. I spoke to several of these people, some of whom had been educated in the American Mission Schools. They told me that they had travelled for two months. They were without money and food and several expressed their wish that they could die rather than go on and endure the sufferings that they were undergoing. The people on the road were carrying with them practically all their household possessions and those who had no carts or animals were carrying them on their backs. It was not unusual to see a woman with a big pack wrapped up in a mattress and a

little child of a few months old on top of the pack. They were mostly bareheaded and their faces were swollen from the sun and exposure. Many had no shoes on and some had their feet wrapped in old pieces of rags which they had torn from their clothing. At Intily there was an encampment of about 10,000 and at Kadma a large encampment of 150,000. At this place adjacent to their encampment, were Turkish troops who exacted "backshish" from them before they would let them go on the road to Aleppo. Many who had no money had had to stay in this camp since their arrival there about two months before. I spoke with several Armenians here and they told me the same stories of brutal treatment and robbery at the hands of the gendarmes in charge, as I had heard all along the road. They had to go at least half a mile for water from this encampment and the condition of the camp was filthy. From Kadma on to Aleppo I witnessed the worst sights of the whole trip. Here the people began to play out in the intense heat and no water and I passed several who were prostrate actually dying of thirst. One woman whom I assisted was in a deplorable condition and unconscious from thirst and exhaustion and further on I saw two young girls who had become so exhausted that they had fallen on the road and lay with their already swollen faces exposed to the sun. The road for a great distance was being repaired and covered with cracked stone; on one side of the road was

a footpath but many of the Armenians were so dazed from fatigue and exposure that they did not see this footpath and were walking -- and many barefooted -- on this cracked stone; their feet were bleeding as a result. The destination of all these Armenians is Aleppo. Here they are kept crowded in all available vacant houses, khans, Armenian churches, courtyards and open lots. Their condition in Aleppo is beyond description. I personally visited several of the places where they were kept and found them starving and dying by the hundred every day. In one vacant house which I visited, I saw women and children and men all in the same room lying on the floor so close together that it was impossible to walk between them. Here they had been for months, those who had survived, and the condition of the floor was filthy. Many were lying in their own excrement.

The British Consulate was filled with these exiles and from this place, the dead were removed almost every hour. Coffin makers throughout the city were working late into the night making rough boxes for the dead whose relatives or friends could afford to give them decent burial. Most of the dead were simply thrown into two wheeled carts which made daily round to all the places where the Armenians were confined. These carts were open at first but afterwards covers were made for them. An Armenian physician whom I know and who is treating

⑦ hundreds of these suffering Armenians who have become ill through exposure on the trip, hunger and thirst, told me that there are hundreds dying daily in Aleppo from starvation and the result of the brutal treatment and exposure that they have undergone on the journey from their native places. Many of these suffering Armenians refuse alms saying that the little money so obtained will only prolong their sufferings and they prefer to die. From Aleppo those who are able to pay are sent by train to Damascus, those who have no money are sent over the road to the Interior towards Deir-El-Zor. In Damascus I found conditions practically the same as in Aleppo; and here hundreds are dying every day. From Damascus, they are sent still further south into the Haurán where their fate is unknown. Several Turks whom I interviewed, told me that the motive of this exile was to exterminate the race, and in no instance did I see any Moslem giving alms to Armenians, it being considered a criminal offense for anyone to aid them.

I remained in Damascus and Aleppo about a month leaving for Smyrna on the 26th October. All along the road, I met thousands of these unfortunate exiles still coming into Aleppo. The sights I witnessed on this trip were more pitiful than those I had seen on my trip to Aleppo. There seems to be no end to the caravan which moves over the mountain range from Bozanti south. Through-

2 out the day from sunrise to sunset, the road as far as one can see, is crowded with these exiles. Just outside of Tarsus, I saw a dead woman lying by the roadside and further on passed two more dead women, one of whom was being carried by two gendarmes away from the roadside to be buried. Her legs and arms were so emaciated that the bones were nearly through her flesh and her face was swollen and purple from exposure. Further along, I saw two gendarmes carrying a dead child between them away from the road where they had dug a grave. Many of these soldiers and gendarmes who follow the caravan have spades and as soon as an Armenian dies, they take the corpse away from the roadside and bury it.

The open spaces around the khans en route are used as camping places for the Armenians and the ground is littered with refuse and human excrement, the stench from which is unbearable. I saw many people who had been in good circumstances forced to lie in this filth. Their clothes were rags and many had no shoes. The mornings were cold and many were dying from exposure. There are very few young men in these caravans, the majority are women and children accompanied by a few old men over 50 years of age. At Bairamoglu, I talked with a woman who was demented from the sufferings she had undergone. She told me that her husband and father had both been killed before her eyes and that she had been forced for three days to walk without rest. She had with her two little

① children and all had been without bread for a day. I gave her some money which she told me would probably be taken from her before the day was over.

Turks and Kurds meet these caravans as they pass through the country and sell them food at exorbitant prices. I saw a small boy about 7 years old riding on a donkey with his baby brother in his arms. They were all that was left of his family. Many of these people go for days without bread and they become emaciated beyond description. I saw several fall from starvation and only at certain places along this road is there water. Many die of thirst. Some of the Armenians who can afford it hire carriages. These are paid for in advance and the prices charged are exorbitant. At many places like Bozanti for example, where there is an encampment of Turkish soldiers, there is not enough bread for these Armenians and only two hours from Bozanti I met a woman who was crying for bread. She told me that she had been in Bozanti for two days and was unable to obtain anything to eat except what travelers like myself had given her. Many of the beasts of burden belonging to the Armenians die of starvation. It is not an unusual sight to see an Armenian removing a pack from the dead animal and putting it on to his own shoulders. Many Armenians told me that although they are allowed to rest at night, they get no sleep because of the pangs of hunger and cold. These people walk throughout the whole day at a shuffling gait and for hours do not speak to one

8
another. At one place where I stopped along the road for lunch, I was surrounded by a crowd of little children all crying for bread. Many of these little tots are obliged to walk barefooted along the road and many of them carry a little pack on their backs. They are all emaciated, their clothes are in rags and their hair in a filthy condition. The filth has given rise to millions of flies and I saw several babies' faces and eyes covered with these insects, their mothers being too exhausted to brush them away. Disease has broken out in several places along the road and in Aleppo several cases of typhus fever among the Armenians were reported when I left.


Many families have been separated, the men being sent in one direction and the women and children in another. I saw one woman who was with child lying in the middle of the road crying and over her stood a gendarme threatening her if she did not get up and walk. Many children are born along the way and most of these die as their mothers have no nourishment for them.

None of these people have any idea where they are going or why they are being exiled. They go day after day along the road with the hope that they might somewhere reach a place where they may be allowed to rest and I saw several old men carrying on their backs the tools of their trade, probably with the hope that they may some day settle

down somewhere.

The road over the Taurus Mountains in places is most difficult and oftentimes crude conveyances drawn by buffalo, oxen and milk cows are unable to make the grades and are abandoned and overturned by the gendarmes into the ravine below. The animals are turned loose. I saw several carts piled high with baggage on the top of which were many Armenians, break down and throw their occupants in the road. One of the drivers, who was a Turk, and who had collected an advance from the people whom he was driving, considered it a huge joke when one woman broke her leg from such a fall.

There seems to be no cessation of the streams of these Armenians pouring down from the north, Angora and the region round the Black Sea. Their condition grows worse everyday. The sights that I saw on my return trip were worse than those on my trip going and now that the cold weather and winter rains are setting in, deaths are more numerous. The roads in some places are almost impassable.



**FROM AMBASSADOR MORGENTHAU'S PAPERS, REEL 22
MANUSCRIPT DIVISION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, Washington, D.C. 29540
HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN QUESTION**

For the last six hundred years their history is a record of persecutions, a real martyrdom. No where else the abuse of brutal force has been as great as in Turkey. The conquered Christians have not had security of life, honor or property. Religious toleration has been practiced under the most humiliating conditions. Churches should be small and not conspicuous; no bells should ring; a Moslem had a perfect right to stop a Christian on the street and cut his head off to see if his sword was sharp enough. A Christian should have an extra handkerchief to take the dust off the shoes of a Moslem at a signal.

It is only after second half of the 19th century, under pressure of the European countries, whose influence was growing- that the condition of Christians in the capital was improved; those living in the interior were and are still in the same insecure state. As a result of this oppressive rule, the number of Armenians has greatly decreased.

Massacres:

Thousands have been massacred periodically:

In 1896 (reign of Abdul Hamid) 300,000 perished by violent death, disease, hunger and exposure. In 1909 (Young Turk Regime) 20,000 were massacred at Adana.

Thousands have been forced to become Moslems, and many have immigrated to Europe and America. But the mass of the people have persisted to stay in their country and maintained, in spite of all persecutions, their national institutions, racial traditions, language and religion.

European Powers have principally taken interest in the Armenian Question since the last Russo-Turkish War (1878), when they obligated Turkey by Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin to introduce reforms in the Administration of the Armenian provinces.

The demands of the Armenians were most elementary: They wanted rights of security of life, honor, and property and equality before the law. They wanted the establishment of a regime of order and justice under European control, as experience had proved to them that the Turks would and could do nothing by themselves in the matter of reforms.

These simple rights have been denied them.

On account of political considerations and rivalry, the Great Powers have never been able To agree to force the Turks to fulfill the provisions of Article 61 of the Berlin Treaty.

**Reasons of Persecution manifold: 1. Political 2. Economic 3.Social and Religious
Political:**

The Turks have been unable to assimilate the Armenians. The latter are on a higher plane by their civilization and culture. On account of the terrible sufferings they have endured, in spite of their loyalty and services to the State, they, the Armenians, have naturally turned their eyes to the European Christian Powers for help and deliverance. Turks have resented this bitterly and in order to avoid foreign interference-instead of

following the wiser course of reforming their administration and thereby solve the problem at its roots- they have decided to annihilate the Armenian race and thus terminate the Armenian Question. The Turks want Turkey for the Turks alone. Therefore by all imaginable means they have tried to exterminate the Armenians. A misconceived, narrow, nationalism-combined with a fanaticism of the blindest and darkest kind- has been one of the chief causes of these unprecedented persecutions.

Economic:

The Turks have been a warring race. They left the Commercial field to the Christians and the Jews. They have had the army and the administration of the country in their control. There are some merchants, artisans and agriculturists among them, but the vast majority of the Turks are public officials, soldiers and laborers. The non-Moslems have become rich through commerce and industry, while the Turks, in spite of all the assistance they have received from the Government have made no progress in that line.

To show you how the Armenians control commerce and industry in Asia Minor, I will mention the following statistical facts regarding the province of Sivas, where the Armenian population is not as large as in some other vilayets.

Of 153 factories in vilayet of Sivas, 130 belonged to Armenians, 20 to Turks.

Number of workmen amounted to 17,000, of these 14,000 were Armenians.

Of 316 merchants, 268 were Armenians, 36 Turks, and 12 Greeks.

Of 37 bankers, 32 were Armenians and 5 Turks.

As the Turks could not overtake the Armenians, the Government would periodically organize massacres and hamper them all the time in order to check their progress.

Social and Religious:

Fanaticism. The masses of the Turkish people are in dense ignorance and fanaticism. The number of Turkish schools very limited. Armenians are unquestionably far more advanced in culture. They have their own schools which they run at their own expense, while the Turkish government schools are subsidized by the Government.

The Armenians (like all other non-Moslems in the country) pay taxes for public instruction but receives no support from the Government for their schools.

The Government does not favor the creation of new schools by the Christians, on the contrary they raise all sorts of difficulties to hamper and obstruct.

Just before the deportations there were:

785 Armenian schools in Turkey, with an attendance of 82,000 students, while there are only 150 Turkish schools, with an attendance of 17,000.

The Kurds do not have a single school.

This ignorance of the Turks, coupled with religious prejudices, has been another cause of disagreement between the Turks and the Armenians, and has rendered the masses of the Turks a ready tool of persecution in the hands of wicked leaders.

A Christian is never regarded by a Moslem as his equal. A Christian is considered as a

raya, a serf, a subject, never a citizen enjoying equal rights. And when you consider that not only the ordinary people, but the rulers also think the same way, and that really there is not a single governor thoroughly prepared for his position, you would naturally expect nothing else than these lamentable results.

Recent Developments: Present European War and its bearing on the Armenian Question.

The present party in power; its sympathy for the Germans growing out of their enmity to Russia. While they were at war with the European Powers, they wanted to avail themselves of the opportunity to exterminate the Armenians while nobody could stop them. Political considerations prevented Germany and Austria from interfering with the atrocities committed by their Turkish ally.

The Turks claim that they had to resort to these stringent means for their safety as the Armenians were not loyal. But even supposing that the deportations were necessary, nothing can justify, as the Turks admit it themselves, the atrocious crimes which were committed.

Methods of Extermination:

1. Requisitions, goods taken without payment, resulting in economic ruin.
2. Confiscations
3. Forced exorbitant contributions and taxes
4. Searches in Armenian houses for arms, but in reality for pillage.
5. Bastinado, torture beyond imagination, too obscene to be related.
6. Forced conversion to Mohammedanism.
7. Massacres, partial and wholesale, women, children and old men and women not spared.
8. Deportations: Slow death, with all accompanying horrors on the way. No means of Transportation, had to walk on foot most of the way. En route attacks by bands of criminals especially liberated from prisons for that purpose. Women, young ladies violated daily, at each village on their way; many of them taken to harems; families separated; mothers threw themselves into river with their children to save themselves from shame.

No provisions made for food or shelter for these unfortunate people, many of whom are educated and well-to-do people, who are not allowed to draw their own money from their bank as the Government had confiscated it together with their property as "abandoned property". They sold their furniture at ridiculously low prices when they were ordered to leave their homes and start on a trip with an unknown destination. They sold pianos at \$5, cows at \$3. Even these moneys were stolen from them on the way. There are bishops, doctors, lawyers, professors, journalists among them, dead, dying...Thousands have died of exhaustion, exposure, disease, want of food. Corpses of children were seen on roads by travelers.

Relief Work: Americans have been the first and most important helpers.

Interest of America purely humanitarian. Missionaries have been foremost. Their sympathy towards Armenians very deep-their whole work has been among them. Activities of Embassy, consulates, and Missionaries in distribution of funds and food among sufferers. Money goes direct to its object; no expenses, New York philanthropist is paying expenses himself.

Present rupture of relations between America and Turkey has not affected work of relief. We have three distinct channels for transmission of relief funds, and have devoted and reliable workers on the field there for their distribution.

Hundreds of thousands of Armenians need immediate help. Latest telegrams received from Turkey and the Caucasus make strong appeals for continued help. No funds on hand, already overdrawn \$40,000 to give the poor people a morsel of bread.